

Thank you, Chairman Blasdel and members of the House Taxation Committee, for having this important hearing today on HB512.

I am Dee Brown, resident of rural Hungry Horse in the northwestern part of Montana, commonly known as grizzly bear and huckleberry country.

I am in total support of Rep. O'Neil's HB 512 which is the twin to HB 654 from the 2009 session. (HB654 didn't make it out of committee. Rep. Arlene Becker from Billings was the only Democrat who voted for the blast motion on the floor of the House....didn't get enough 'super majority' votes for it to come up for discussion.)

I would also like to take this time to applaud Governor Schweitzer and the majority of the state land board who voted to open the Otter Creek tracts for coal development in the state. With the Bakken oil field and potential of the Otter Creek tracts, we must be leaders in our state and recognize how this natural resource development will be a direct benefit to our taxpayers.

HB512 will direct 25% of all taxes collected from new development in Montana to benefit school flex funds. We must no longer be jealous of our neighboring states, North Dakota and Wyoming, who have already figured out the direct correlation between natural resources and the health of our tax revenues.

School flex funds could have used 1/4 of the Arch Coal deal to shore up present budget shortfalls instead of all \$86 million of it going to the general fund this biennium. Let's not let another opportunity like this pass through our hands.

Vote for HB512. It will make a difference to our schools as they struggle with decreasing enrollments and increasing costs.

Thanks,


Dee Brown
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March 16, 2011